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SUBJECT: Denmark's New Climate Attaches Deployed to Washington, Brasilia, Pretoria and New Delhi

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Ambassador Cain hosted a lunch on August 19 at his residence in honor of Denmark's newly-named climate attaches, including Hans Jakob Eriksen, who will be posted to the Danish Embassy in Washington, DC. An initiative of the Climate and Energy Ministry, in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry, the five attaches will take up their postings in Denmark's embassies to the U.S., Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa from September 2008 through spring 2010. Their mission is to help Denmark, as host, prepare for a successful COP-15 meeting in Copenhagen in December ¶2009. Eriksen is well and favorably known to this Embassy. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Danish Climate Attaches:  
-- Hans Jakob Eriksen, appointed to Washington, DC  
-- Steven Foster, Moscow  
-- Tine Lund, Brasilia  
-- Peter Krogh Sxrensen, Pretoria  
-- Thomas Haahr, New Delhi (could not attend)

¶3. (SBU) The Ambassador congratulated the appointees and the Danish government for this diplomatic initiative, wished them well in their assignments, and offered to be of assistance making introductions to U.S. officials if desired. We briefed on G8 and MEM results, and the Clean Tech Fund.

¶4. (SBU) According to Eriksen, the naming of the five attaches grew out of Climate and Energy Minister Connie Hedegaard's push for greater reporting on climate negotiations from embassies in these key capitals. Lund more diplomatically credited the PM's office for the initiative. Eriksen said the attaches would go beyond reporting to conduct climate diplomacy (by "offering suggestions" to host nations) to build consensus in favor of an agreement in Copenhagen.

Turf Battles Over, or Just Beginning?

¶5. (SBU) All speculated that there could be some initial awkwardness sorting out their duties in the embassies, stemming from structural tensions caused by answering to two ministries (Climate/Energy and MFA). The attaches did not confirm but seemed to imply that turf battles were the reason the Danish Embassy in Beijing had rebuffed Hedegaard's attempt to place an attache there,

saying it was adequately staffed to handle any new requirements.

Mixed Bunch

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¶6. (SBU) The four attaches we met said they were meeting for the first time as a group. Two hailed from the Climate ministry (Eriksen and Lund); Foster, a career commercial diplomat, and Sxrensen, a former military officer who has been working with the UN and NGOs in Iraq and the Middle East on humanitarian assistance, admitted they are new to the subject of climate change.

¶7. (SBU) All five attaches planned to attend the upcoming August UNFCCC session in Accra, Ghana. They were slated to undertake joint training/briefings in early September and expected to depart shortly thereafter to take up their positions in the Danish Embassies in their respective capitals. Only Foster has served in an embassy before (including to Moscow).

¶8. (SBU) Eriksen said he was selected for this posting after Thomas Becker, Denmark's climate negotiator, named him to accompany Hedegaard on her numerous visits to the U.S. over the past year. Hedegaard has made encouraging U.S. participation in the negotiation to replace the Kyoto Protocol a top Danish priority. Eriksen said that he had accompanied Climate Minister Hedegaard to meetings in this summer Washington with Obama and McCain climate advisors. The Ambassador encouraged Eriksen to make contact with U.S. negotiators at State/CEQ/NSC as well.

¶9. (SBU) Echoing Minister Hedegaard, the attaches described

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themselves as "realistic" about chances a binding treaty could be signed at the COP-15 meeting in Copenhagen in December 2009. Eriksen speculated that something short of that might instead be achieved. For example, there might be an agreement "with holes in it to be filled later."

Comment

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¶10. (SBU) Hedegaard first publicly announced plans to select climate attaches over a year ago. Turf issues between her and the Foreign Ministry have undoubtedly slowed their deployment, and in the case of Beijing, appear to have entirely thwarted Hedegaard's intentions. The selection of the five clearly involved a bureaucratic balancing act, with the result that at least two of the five arrived at their posts with negligible prior experience working on the climate issue. That said, we know Eriksen to be a trusted member of Hedegaard's advisors, and a good friend of the Embassy. We urge USG openness towards him and to this Danish initiative elsewhere, as U.S. interests in a successful COP-15 appear increasingly aligned with Denmark's.

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